

Friends to the End

Story: Friends to the End

Storylink: <https://www.fanfiction.net/s/7675031/1/>

Category: Lion King

Genre: Adventure/Romance

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Authorlink: <https://www.fanfiction.net/u/3365186/>

Last updated: 12/28/2011

Words: 19212

Rating: T

Status: Complete

Content: Chapter 1 to 7 of 7 chapters

Source: FanFiction.net

Summary: Can Simba and Nala take back the Pride Lands, rescue their families and confess their feelings towards one another before time runs out?

Chapter 1: Chapter 1: Exiled

AN: Merry Christmas to all! What did Santa bring me for Christmas this year? Well, nothing. Santa isn't real. I found that out one night when I crept downstairs to see my parents carrying in a big sack full of presents through the front door. I then proceeded to run back into bed and cry myself to sleep. It was too much for a fifteen-year-old boy to take in.

Anyway, I believe you're after the final story of the series. Thanks for taking an interest, and enjoy the first two chapters!

Friends to the End

Chapter One: Exiled

Simba and Nala didn't stop running. Their legs continued to pound the ground until they reached the relative safety of the jungle. It was the only place they could think of going. It was the only place that seemed safe. The Pride Lands certainly *weren't* safe. They couldn't go back. Not now.

They skidded to a halt in an area surrounded with enormous trees, gasping for breath. They had ran quite a considerable distance. They didn't think that they had it in them. All that chasing each other around the Pride Lands had obviously paid off.

"Did you see anyone following us?" Simba asked through gasps.

Nala glanced around, and shook her head. "No," she replied. "No, I didn't see anything."

Once he had caught his breath, Simba turned his attention to Nala, giving her a concerned look. "You okay?" he asked.

Nala looked up at him, and gazed into his auburn eyes. A few seconds of silence passed, and then her face scrunched up as she began to cry. She hugged Simba tightly, her tears spilling lightly onto his fur.

Simba patted her back sympathetically. "It's okay, Nala. It's okay."

The poor cub. The events of the last hour had certainly been quite depressing for her. Her home had been stolen, her mother had been hypnotised into a mindless slave, and to top it off she learned that one of her greatest enemies murdered her father a while ago. It was just too much for her to take in.

"Please, Simba..." she mumbled as she sobbed and cried. "Don't leave me. I... I don't want to be on my own. Please..."

Simba shushed her, and put a paw under her chin, pushing her head up so she was looking at him. "Look at me, Nala. I promise I won't leave you. You're my best friend, and we're going to stay together."

"For ever?" she hoped. Nala never wanted Simba to leave her. She wanted to be with him for the rest of her life. That was something she was sure of. She adored that silly little cub so much that it broke her heart when she thought that he didn't like her in the same way as she did. She really did like him... she *loved* him...

He smiled. "For ever."

Nala sniffled, and managed a smile back. "You know what, Simba?"

"What?" Simba asked.

"You're the greatest friend in the world," she told him, meaning every word of it. He was so caring towards her all the time. He acted as if she was the most important person in the world to him. Maybe she was...

No, that was a silly thought. It was just Simba's good nature. He had a heart of gold. A pure heart. He was probably like that way to everyone else. Actually, come to think of it, there *wasn't* anyone else. Aside from his family, Nala was the only other person Simba really talked to. She was his only friend. It was something she still didn't understand completely. Wasn't the Prince supposed to be the most popular cub in the pride? It was actually quite the opposite. Instead of hanging around with all the 'cool' cubs, Simba chose to hang around with someone like her.

Well, he did always say that the other cubs were too boring for him. Maybe she was just the right person he was looking for. It made sense. They were very alike, and made quite a couple. In fact, they made a *perfect* couple. It made perfect sense that Nala had a crush on him. The only thing getting in the way of this was the fact that she didn't know how Simba felt about her!

I wonder what he was going to tell me earlier? she thought, thinking back to not too long ago when they were sat on the edge of Pride Rock, watching the beautiful sunset together. It was a lovely, perfect, romantic scene. Simba was just about to tell her something when Scar, Hago and the hyenas ruined everything. They had taken over the Pride Lands and enslaved all of its inhabitants, reducing them to mindless slaves who would obey any command.

It could have been nothing, but then again it could have been something really important to Simba that he needed to tell her.

But if it was so important, wouldn't he have brought it up afterwards? It didn't look like it was so important after all. She thought her dream was going to come true. She always dreamt of watching the sunset with Simba. They would be snuggled up together, nice and cosy. Then Simba would turn to her and say, "Nala, I have a crush on you."

Ooh, that would just make her day!

"Simba, what do we do now?" she asked him, having no idea at all about what their next move would be.

They couldn't go back to the Pride Lands, that was for certain. The place was now most likely swarming with hyenas, who most likely had orders to kill on sight, and would most likely eat them for their dinner afterwards.

Yep, going to the Pride Lands was out of bounds, all right.

Simba thought for a moment, putting a paw to his chin. She always thought it was so cute when he did that. Just like everything else about him: his thin body, his handsome eyes, and that funny little tuft of fur on the top of his head. That was Simba all over – adorable from whichever way you looked at him.

"Well, obviously we can't go home," he replied. "So I guess we'll have to stay here."

"For ever?" said Nala.

Simba shrugged. "What else can we do? We'll die if we even *try* to go back."

Nala sighed. "Yeah," she said. "Yeah, I guess you're right."

But then Nala realised that Simba was basically giving up. What was up with that? Simba *never* gave up! She always thought he was the hero, the one who would sacrifice himself if it meant that one life could be saved.

"Simba, wait a sec," she said to him. "Why are you just giving up like that?"

"What can we do?" was his reply. "They've got us completely outnumbered. There's no one we can find that'll help us. We'll just have to stay here for the rest of our lives, where it's safe."

"But, Simba, they've made everyone we know slaves!" Nala argued. "We can't just leave them like that. I thought you wanted us to leave so we could think up a plan."

He shrugged. "I don't have a plan," he admitted. "This is a lot worse than just fighting off a couple of hyenas. Scar and Hago are the new Kings now. We can't do anything."

Nala smiled as a thought came to her. "Yes we can."

Simba gave her a funny look. "What do you mean?"

"We wouldn't die if we went back," Nala told him.

"Yes, we would!" Simba exclaimed, knowing that as soon as they wandered into the Pride Lands, the hyenas would instantly rip them to shreds, before eating every scrap left of them. Going into the Pride Lands was suicide, no question about it.

"Simba, think about it. Hago and Scar hate us more than anyone else, right?"

Simba nodded, not really sure where his best friend was going with this. "Yeah. I guess so."

"Well, wouldn't they want to finish us off themselves?" presumed Nala. "They wouldn't want the hyenas to kill us. They'd want to kill us personally."

"I still don't get what your idea is," Simba told her.

Nala rolled her eyes. "Look, tomorrow we'll go into the Pride Lands and say to the hyenas that we surrender. They'll probably take us up to Pride Rock where Hago and Scar are. When they try to kill us, we can fight back."

"But what if they send the entire pride after us?" Simba asked. "We'll be outnumbered, like I said earlier."

"We need to get his staff," Nala told Simba. "Hago's staff. If we can destroy it, then everyone will go back to normal."

"How does that make sense, exactly?"

"Because, silly, that's where he gets his magic from. If we destroy the staff then we'll free everyone from Hago's control." Nala grinned. She could be really clever when she wanted to.

Simba couldn't help but grin back. That was a pretty good plan. It was a very risky plan, but it was still a pretty good one. "So we free everyone and then *they* fight back?"

Nala nodded. "Yep. It's a good plan, huh?"

Simba nodded. "You know we could die, right?"

"Yeah. But I'm willing to take a risk if it means we can get our home back," she replied, sounding rather determined. She felt a burning anger inside of her for Hago. He was the one who had killed her father, and enslaved her mother – not to mention the countless times he'd tried to kill her and Simba. She wanted him to pay for the crimes he had committed. How would Hago pay for his crimes?

With his life.

Simba scratched the top of his head. "Okay. We'll try. I don't know if it'll work, though."

Nala got closer to Simba, so their fur was touching. "Whatever happens, we'll always be together, won't we?"

Simba looked into her teal eyes, and smiled. "Yeah," he replied. "And if it doesn't work, and we have to run away for ever, I'll take care of you. I promise."

"I don't doubt that," she told him. "Not for a second."

***Chapter 2*: Chapter 2: The New Kings**

Chapter Two: The New Kings

The power. Hago had never experienced anything like it. All that hard work had finally paid off for him. He was now the King of the Pride Lands.

Well, the *joint* King of the Pride Lands. He was sharing the kingdom with Scar, and that something he was simply going to have to put up with. That is, unless he could come up with some sneaky way of eliminating him...

Maybe that would have to wait for another day.

"*You can't find them?*" roared Scar from the outside of the den at Pride Rock. "They're only two cubs! How hard could they possibly be to locate?"

Hago was examining the den, making sure everything was in order. He wanted his new home to be absolutely perfect. There was going to be nothing wrong with it at all. But it was quite hard to check it out with Scar shouting at the top of his voice like that.

Hago sighed, rolled his eyes and walked out of the den to find Scar shouting at his three 'top' hyenas: Shenzi, Banzai and Ed. Being the controlling psycho he was, Scar had quickly adjusted to ruling the kingdom. He immediately sent the pride to work on a food hunt, because Scar hadn't eaten in a very long time, due to him being stuck in the jungle for quite a long period. As for the hyenas, he'd sent them to search for Simba and Nala. They were the only two who had managed to escape, and Scar was now obsessed with capturing them, even though the two cubs were simply outnumbered. There was no way they could defeat the might of the army Hago and Scar were now in control of.

"What are you doing now?" Hago asked Scar, interrupting his furious rant at the three hyenas. "I'm trying to look at my new royal den, if you don't mind!"

"Well, sorry, but I'm busy looking for those two troublesome cubs!" Scar shot back.

"What are they gonna do?" Hago argued. "I told you they won't be able to stop us."

"It still makes me worried," Scar admitted. "They're unpredictable. There's no telling what they have planned."

"Just give up, Scar," Hago told him. "It's pointless."

"Don't tell me what to do!" Scar snapped. "I'm the new King! Nobody orders me around!"

"I'm the new King, too," Hago reminded him. "Don't forget that, Scar."

Shenzi, Banzai and Ed all turned their heads in Hago's direction, smiles on all three of their faces. "Yeah," said Shenzi. "Hago's the new King, too."

She leapt in front of Hago, grinning. "You won't make us look for those two cubs, will you, Hago?"

Banzai nodded. "Yeah! You'll let us rest, won't you, O Mighty King?"

Hago smiled. "You have to be fair with the hyenas, Scar," he told his fellow King, before looking down at the three hyenas. "You may take a break for today."

"Oh, thank you!" Shenzi exclaimed. "I was beginning to think we'd *never* stop searching. Thank you, O Great King!"

The three of them then bolted away, hurrying down Pride Rock. Hago glanced up at the full moon that hung high in the sky, before looking back at Scar.

"I'm in charge of the hyenas!" Scar declared angrily. "How dare you tell them to stop searching!"

"Scar, I'm quite tired of hearing you whining all the time, to be honest," Hago told him, turning around to head back into the den. "I think I could do with a good night's sleep. I have a long day ahead of me, you know. A day full of..." He chuckled. "Ordering around to do."

Hago chuckled to himself and headed back into the den, where he found his brother, Bora, looking around excitedly.

"Well, this is a nice set-up," Bora observed as he looked around. "The royal den certainly looks comfy. You must be glad

to finally be King, huh?"

Hago sighed. "Indeed," he replied. "I've never felt better."

Hago lay down to get ready to go to sleep, when he heard a cracking sound coming from his back. He turned his head to see that his back no longer looked crooked. He laughed. "Things just keep getting better and better! Now my back is better too! I wonder why?" He pondered on this for a moment. "It could be stress related. It makes sense, what with my constant anger and all."

"Great!" Bora exclaimed. "So, what's the plan for tomorrow?"

"Oh, I'll probably torture a few cubs or something," Hago replied as he closed his eyes.

"Isn't that a bit cruel?" Bora asked.

Hago yawned, and nodded. "I suppose so, but being bad makes me feel better. What I really wouldn't mind getting my paws on is those two cubs. Executing them in front of everyone they know and love would make the perfect day for me. Still, they're long gone now. I don't think they'll ever come back. After all, how can you defeat an army of hyenas and a hypnotised pride?"

"I can't believe we're going to try and defeat an army of hyenas and a hypnotised pride," Simba said to Nala as they lay down on the ground, getting ready to go to sleep.

"Are you still worried, Simba?" Nala asked. "Come on, we're the bravest cubs in the world! We can do this! We just have to try, that's all."

Simba shrugged as he curled up. "Ah well, it beats staying in the jungle until we die."

Simba shut his eyes, wanting to get a good night's rest before the great task that awaited him tomorrow. However, a few seconds after he closed his eyes, he felt someone tap him.

He opened his eyes and rolled over to see Nala, looking down at him and smiling nervously. "Uh... Simba?" she said shyly.

He smiled. "Yeah, Nala? What is it?"

"Um... can I, uh... sleep with you?" she asked. "I don't want to sleep by myself. It's kinda scary out here."

"Sure," he replied, gesturing for her to lay down beside him.

Nala's heart was pounding in her chest as she lay down and snuggled up with Simba, feeling his warmth embrace her. She always felt so comfortable when she was with him. She always felt like nothing could harm her – like she was safe, protected. "Simba?"

"Yeah?"

"What were you going to tell me earlier?" she asked. "You know, when we were watching the sunset?"

Simba looked shocked by this question. He quickly became nervous, like he always did when anything that related to his deep secret was talked about. "Oh, well I... Uh... I'll tell you tomorrow. Yeah, tomorrow."

Nala smiled. "Oh, okay," she said, while she mused about what Simba could possibly want to tell her.

He likes you, you idiot! Nala's mind screamed. It's so obvious!

No, it's not! she argued with herself. *He could want to tell me anything! Why do you always have to think about Simba having a crush on you?*

Because that's all you want to think about, her mind replied. *After all, I am you. Now snuggle up with him and shut up. Enjoy Simba while you can, because he's obviously going to fall in love with someone else when he gets older.*

Are you being sarcastic with me? she asked herself.

No, you're being sarcastic with yourself. I'm you, remember? she reminded herself.

Oh, yeah. Nala put a paw to her chin, her eyes narrowed. *Am I insane?*

Completely.

AN: Enjoy that? I know you did. Why would you read through thirteen connected stories if you didn't enjoy them? Expect two more chapters tomorrow. Now I have to go and endure more of the festive season. I barely managed Christmas dinner. You know, I think there's a turkey lying in a cold, dark warehouse somewhere crying, "Mom? Dad?" Now don't get all sympathetic with me, because come next year you'll be eating it.

"Aw... poor turkey. It tastes nice though, doesn't it?"

Chapter 3: Chapter 3: In Hiding

AN: Lovely to hear from my lovely readers in their lovely reviews. I like the word lovely, as you can guess. So, here I present the next two lovely (see what I did there, eh?) chapters.

Chapter Three: In Hiding

Hago's dreams weren't pretty. In fact, most would consider them nightmares. Horrible, repulsive, sickening nightmares. However, Hago thought of his dreams as simply wonderful, and a great source of inspiration came from them.

But that was because – of course – he was insane. This was due to a lot of hate, anger, and a huge lust for power. Ever since Hago was just a cub, his mind had been warped by the torment of his family. They never thought he would live up to anything. He would just be an idiot, a failure.

He promised to himself one day that he would prove his family wrong. He would show them the error of their ways. One day, they would see that *they* were the failures and not him. They made the mistake of insulting Hago deeply, and – eventually – they paid for it with their lives. Hago felt no remorse or guilt for murdering his parents, his older sister and his newborn brother, because he just didn't care. Hago's family didn't deserve to live. Their fate was sealed, and always had been. The painful screams and horrific cries they let out on that fateful night gave Hago nothing but the purest of pleasure. To him, it felt morally right.

The only remaining member of Hago's family was his older brother, and that was because Hago actually *liked* him. This was partly due to the fact that Bora always liked Hago back. Hago knew that. What Hago *didn't* know was that deep down, Bora was absolutely terrified of what his younger brother was capable of. No one could really blame him, either. Hago terrified most people, and, in most cases, killed them.

It was Bora who woke Hago from another one of his horrific dreams. Dreams which involved little cubs being burnt to ashes in front of their screaming and crying families, while Hago laughed evilly, his cackles echoing into the smoking sky.

"Hago!" Bora called, shaking him awake. "Hago! Wake up!"

Bora was met with a slash to the face, causing him to cry out in pain and stagger backwards. "Ow!" he cried in agony, as he put a paw to his cheek. Three claw marks were now embedded in his skin, and they stung fiercely. They didn't look like they were going to go away anytime soon...

Hago's eyes snapped open and he hauled himself to his paws, looking over at Bora – who was now whimpering in pain – and sighed. "I was having such a lovely dream, too," he said, not really giving a damn about the pain Bora was suffering. Narrowing his eyes, he turned his head in Bora's direction. "Now what is it you want to tell me? It'd better be good, or you're going to have matching claw marks on *both* your cheeks."

"I was just going to say the hyenas found someone hiding in the Pride Lands," Bora informed his sibling, annoyance evident in his voice. That slash from Hago's sharp claws *seriously* hurt. Looking down, Bora noticed there was a small puddle of blood on the ground. Just how long was this wound going to bleed for?

"Someone hiding?" Hago echoed. "Who?"

He pointed to the outside of the den. "Go and find out for yourself!" he replied, still holding a paw to his cheek. "*Man*, that hurt!"

"Oh, stop your whining. Get that wound cleaned up and be out here pronto!" Hago then marched towards the outside of the den, interested in who the hyenas could have possibly found lurking around the Pride Lands in secret.

Maybe they've found one of the two brats, Hago hoped, his thoughts turning to Simba and Nala, his greatest enemies.

Over the past few months, they wrecked each and every plan he had ever come up with to take over the Pride Lands. At first it was mildly annoying, then it became irritating, then it became aggravating, and then it became absolutely rage-inducing! Every single time, the two cubs would find some way to defeat him! It was as if they had some kind of power that he didn't know about, a power they used to defeat him every time they tried something. Just what was so good about them? They were only two cubs, for crying out loud!

Fortunately, it seemed Hago had come up with the perfect plan to finally defeat them. Teaming up with Scar was a genius idea, and it really was his last option. If that didn't manage to work out, then Hago wouldn't have been able to go

on anymore. Suicide would have probably been the best viable option. Death would have been a blessed release for him by then. He just wanted to surrender to whatever awaited him after death, if anything awaited him at all.

But for Hago now, death seemed a long, *long* way off. Over the course of just one night, Hago had gone from the lowest of the low to the highest of the high. From the deepest hole to the highest mountain. Rags to riches.

Somehow, Hago doubted that one of the two cubs had been seized and captured. This was because he knew that the two of them were inseparable. You couldn't have Simba without Nala, and you couldn't have Nala without Simba. The only way those two cubs were being captured was if they were captured together.

So that left only one question now: just *who* had they captured? Well, as Hago strode out of the den and into the morning sunlight of the Pride Lands, he got his answer. The prisoner in question was being carried in the mouth of Shenzi, with Banzai and Ed stood at either side of her. The prisoner didn't look too happy.

"This is simply an outrage! I tell you, when King Mufasa hears about this the consequences will be *dire*!"

Hago raised an eyebrow in amusement at seeing King Mufasa's *former* advisor: the Red-billed Hornbill, Zazu. "Oh, it's you," Hago said with a frown, not too happy about seeing him. Hago presumed the puny bird would have perhaps been killed already in the takeover of the Pride Lands.

"Well, of course it's me," said Zazu, frowning back at Hago. "Who else is it going to be?"

"Drop him," Hago instructed Shenzi. She spat Zazu out of her mouth, sending him skidding across the ground, covered in slimy, disgusting drool.

"Oh, this is so degrading," Zazu said as he did his best to shake himself dry. He hated hyenas. Did they have any consideration at all for personal hygiene?

Hago chuckled. "I apologise for your treatment. Actually, I don't. They can eat you for all I care."

"Oh, can I?" asked Shenzi, sounding rather eager to act on that idea. "I *love* crunchy food."

Zazu shuddered. "Oh, come on, you wouldn't feed me to them would you?" he asked, trying to sound brave.

Hago grinned menacingly. "I think you'll find I would, because I really do despise you."

Zazu frowned. "Why, thank you. And I hope your mother dies in a freak hunting accident."

"My mother's dead," Hago said flatly, sounding almost saddened by the thought.

Zazu then suddenly had a very fearful expression on his face. "Oops," he said with a nervous laugh.

"I wouldn't worry," Hago assured Zazu. "I'm the one who killed her."

Zazu breathed a sigh of relief. "Thank goodness for that. For a second there I – wait, *what*?"

Hago laughed. "I never liked my family that much, you see. And, to be honest, they didn't like me all that much either. The only difference is that I got to them before they got to me. Now, down to business. What have you been doing hiding around the Pride Lands?"

"I think the better question would be what have you *done* to the Pride Lands?" asked Zazu.

The Pride Lands had undergone quite a noticeable change over the course of the past night. Hyenas had been positioned to guard just about every way to get into the Pride Lands, while all the pride did was hunt for food.

Hago sighed, smiling down at the bird. "Ah, yes. Do you like the new changes? I think they give the Pride Lands a new... 'ruled by an evil overlord' theme, don't you think so?"

"I think you've turned the place into an absolute mess," Zazu told the new King honestly. "I can't say I'm surprised, what with a scruffy individual such as yourself in charge of things. How did you even manage all of this? When King Mufasa finds out about—"

"You'll find that the only person Mufasa will listen to now is *me*," Hago informed him. "You see, I've hypnotised the entire pride. They're now all totally obedient, which makes me a very happy King."

Zazu looked like he couldn't quite comprehend this. "But... how did you manage to get the hyenas on your side? I thought

that the person in charge of them was—"

"What is going on here?"

Chapter 4: Chapter 4: Snuggled Up

Chapter Four: Snuggled Up

Simba couldn't sleep that night, and the reason why actually surprised him. His home was gone and his parents had been enslaved. He expected that the traumatic events that took place earlier that night would render him unable to sleep, and even if he *could* get to sleep then his mind would be riddled with horrific nightmares. He'd had a lot of nightmares before, and they weren't pretty. They were horrible.

And yet, even though the takeover of the Pride Lands was totally unexpected and rather disturbing, the reason Simba couldn't sleep was because of the creamy-furred cub that lay beside him.

He sighed and smiled. He could tell Nala was sleeping, because of the way she looked. All that terror and fear she was going through earlier seemed to have faded away, replaced by peace and happiness.

Nala had a smile on her face, her head buried in Simba's chest, embracing his warmth as much as she possibly could. She looked like she didn't want to be anywhere else, and, unbeknownst to Simba, she *didn't* want to be anywhere else. Right now, Simba was the only person who was making her happy. Without him, she didn't know what she was going to do.

I wonder what's she's dreaming about? he thought to himself while he watched her sleep. He chuckled softly as a sudden thought crossed his mind. *Maybe she's dreaming about me!*

He continued to chuckle as he rested the back of his head on the ground, knowing that Nala wasn't likely to ever dream about him. She didn't have time for such silly things, unlike Simba. Simba *always* dreamed about her. He could never get her out of his mind, because of how wonderful she was to him.

He looked over at Nala, made sure she was asleep, and then decided to do something that he'd wanted to do for quite a while.

Simba rested his head against Nala's, and put his paw around her, hugging her close to him. He felt his heart race as he listened out to see if Nala had woken up, but she hadn't. In fact, Simba noticed she looked even happier now that Simba was hugging her tight. His heart skipped a beat at such a thought. If she liked what he was doing, then obviously he was doing something right. Maybe it was just what she wanted. Maybe Nala wanted someone to hold her, someone to tell her everything was going to be all right. Someone who cared.

Simba could be that someone. He knew he could, but only if Nala wanted him to be also, and that was something he just couldn't determine. Was he her type? If one looked close enough, then it was pretty obvious the answer was yes.

But this was Simba and Nala's story, not anyone else's, so the way they felt was quite different to the way anyone else would feel.

His day had been ruined, yes, but that didn't detract from how beautiful this moment felt. Even though Simba's home was in ruins, his parents were slaves to a psychopathic villain and everything looked like it was going to only get worse, he knew that there was nowhere he would rather be right now. For that moment – that one *shining* moment – Simba knew where he belonged, and who he belonged with.

There's nothing wrong with tomorrow, Simba thought with a smile as he closed his eyes. *Nothing wrong at all. Nala won't mind, because she doesn't know. But when I tell her, I'm gonna give her the biggest shock ever. Who cares about sunsets or weather or anything else? It should just be about me and Nala.*

Simba then gently drifted off to sleep, promising to himself that whatever happened, Nala was finally going to know the truth. This time, nothing was going to stop him.

Nothing.

Nala awoke in the morning, feeling very calm and serene. She felt very warm, very cosy and very safe. She'd never felt happier. When she finally found the strength to open her eyes, she realised just why she felt so happy.

Simba had his head resting against hers, and had his paw around her, hugging her as close to him as possible. He had this big smile on his face while he slept, and looked as if he was enjoying being so close to Nala.

Nala smiled as she remembered the dream she had while she was sleeping, and she quickly realised why it was such a great dream.

The dream was another one of her 'Simba Loves Nala' fantasies that she had very frequently. It was quite an odd one – instead of her favourite one where they watched the sunset together, this one was quite different.

They were watching heavy rain pound the ground from a cave opening, waiting for it to stop so they could get home safely. It wasn't very beautiful, it wasn't perfect and it wasn't romantic.

Until Simba suddenly told her his secret, that is. From that point on, nothing really mattered to Nala as their muzzles connected in a kiss. Halfway through the unexpectedly romantic moment, Nala realised that their surroundings didn't really matter – not where they were, or what the weather was like. All that mattered was that she and Simba were together.

The situation wasn't that different right now. Aside from her and Simba being together, things weren't actually that good. But for some reason, that didn't really matter right now. Things were perfect...

And then things got very nervous, when Simba's eyes opened and he rolled over to find that his and Nala's noses were touching.

Nala stayed exactly where she was. She was in such a euphoric state that right now she didn't care what position the two of them were in together.

Simba, however, didn't want to *quite* spill his secret just yet, and jumped back in surprise, laughing nervously and trying to put a cool, calm look on his face.

"H-hey, Nala!" Simba exclaimed, doing his trademark cheesy grin. "How are you today?"

She giggled at his sudden nervousness. *Obviously* this was just some kind of misunderstanding, and Simba never really *meant* for them to end up in that rather charming position together. He was so adorable when he got nervous!

"I'm fine, Simba," she replied, getting to her paws. "There is just... *one* thing I need to ask you, though."

Simba laughed, backing away against a tree. "Really? W-why is that? What questions do I need to answer?"

"Well, for a start, why did you have your paw around me while we were sleeping?" she asked, knowing full well that she was going to get another one of his nervous replies from him.

"Well, you were kinda shivering while you were sleeping, so I thought I'd... you know, keep you warm." He grinned innocently, hoping that would fool her. Surely for one more day he could keep Nala guessing, right?

Nala smiled, buying into the little half-lie. It was kind of true, because he was trying to keep her warm as well as get close to her. However, it wasn't really that cold – but Nala didn't know that, so she believed him.

"Oh... okay," Nala said. She looked away from him for a second, sighing. "So... you ready for today?"

He chuckled, thanking Nala in his mind for changing the subject like that. If the Pride Lands weren't under such tyrannical reign then that really could have become a problem!

"Ready?" repeated Simba. "No. But we can't do anything else, can we? We have to try and take back the kingdom, otherwise it's gonna be like that for ever. I don't want that. I can't stand the idea of Mom and Dad getting ordered around by Hago and Uncle Scar. It's... it's not right."

He sighed sadly, knowing this was going to be a tough challenge. Not only did they have to get to Pride Rock successfully, but they also had to fight off a psychotic magical lion, and his insane, power-hungry, greedy uncle.

"We're in this together though, right?" Nala asked, joining him by his side and staring into his auburn eyes.

Simba grinned back. "Right!" he agreed, knowing that as long as they stuck together, they were in with a good chance of beating Scar, Hago, the hyenas, and anyone else who tried to stand in their way. "We're a team, remember? You and me against the world!"

"Yeah," said Nala. "We'll beat Scar, Hago, *and* the hyenas! We'll show 'em who's boss!"

"Yeah!" Simba exclaimed, feeling triumphant and victorious already. They could do it! They could win! They were heroes!

There were a few moments of silence that followed, before Nala spoke up. "Uh, can we get something to eat first, though?" she asked with a giggle. "I'm kind of hungry."

AN: Cuteness to the max! That phrase is catching on. Go on, spread it everywhere like you would with butter! Hmm... I could do with some cheese on toast right now...

Before I travel to the kitchen, I'll kindly remind you that the next two chapters will make their début tomorrow. Until next time...

Chapter 5: Chapter 5: Searching Mission

AN: Only three more chapters to go now, and I warn you now: things are going to get quite disturbing.

Chapter Five: Searching Mission

"Hago, what is *he* doing here?" Scar demanded as he stormed over to Hago's side, looking down at Zazu, who now looked absolutely terrified.

"Oh, Uncle Nazu warned me about things like this," Zazu moaned, thinking that he was going to die any minute now.

"Shut up!" Scar roared, causing Zazu to fall onto his back. He then turned to Hago. "I go away for one morning to check on the hunting party and I come back to find you *already* making deals with associates of the former King!"

"Keep your mane on, Scar," Hago said, pointing at the terrified Zazu. "I'm not making deals with him. In fact, I was just deciding on a suitable punishment for him."

"Actually, you were explaining to me about how you enslaved the Pride Lands," Zazu interjected. "You didn't mention anything about a punish—"

"*I said shut up!*" Scar yelled at the top of his voice, causing Zazu to cower behind a small rock.

I'm dead, Zazu kept thinking as he cowered for his life behind the rock. Any second now, he knew they were going to pick him up and feed him to the hyenas. They'd swallow him whole and he would suffer an agonising death by method of digestion. It would be painful and – this was the worst part – embarrassing, to say the least.

"What are you going to do with him?" Scar asked, sounding really impatient. Ever since he had been made the co-King along with Hago, all he seemed to want to do was order everyone around, and he was making a good job of it. With Scar it was always 'do this' and 'do that' all over the place. It had only been one night, and *already* Scar had quickly taken charge. Couldn't the guy calm down for more than one second?

"I was going to suggest that we enslave him, too," replied Hago in a calm manner, not wanting to get into a confrontation with Scar. He looked ready to lash out at any second, and Hago didn't want this joint ruling of the kingdom to end in blood, sweat and tears.

Scar seemed to compose himself for a second, putting a paw to his chin thoughtfully. "Hmm..." he said as he thought to himself. "That's a... *decent* idea, but I doubt he'd be very helpful even if he *was* under our control. I suppose we'll just have to feed him to the hyenas."

"*No!*" Zazu cried, shaking with fear. "Please, *anything* but that! I'll do anything you want! Please! *Anything!*"

A menacing grin spread across Scar's face as he leaned in close to the frightened Hornbill, staring into his eyes. "Well, you could always do *one* thing that would be of use to us."

Zazu laughed nervously. "A-and w-what might that b-be?" he asked, expecting something truly awful. Well, in Zazu's mind, anything was better than death, so this was actually an upside of sorts.

"I want you to go on a little searching mission," Scar revealed, causing a shocked look from Hago, who looked like he was about to say something in protest until Scar waved him off.

"S-searching mission?" stammered Zazu, not quite believing what Scar had told him. That was it? A searching mission? He was expecting something far more disturbing and horrific than that!

Scar nodded. "That's right. I know that you are familiar those two cubs, Simba and Nala."

"Correct. I presume you want me to..." Zazu gulped. "Find them?"

Scar's grin widened. "*Precisely*. Find the two of them and bring them back to Pride Rock." He turned around so he was facing Hago. "I'm sure you wouldn't mind a live execution, would you, Hago?"

Hago stared into Scar's eyes, and suddenly he smiled in approval. "That sounds fun," he told Scar. "They'd die right where they started." He then grinned, looking up sadistically at the sky. "The Circle of Life."

"And then what happens to me?" Zazu asked.

Scar laughed. "You'll die. But inside you'll feel lucky that you got a few more hours to live."

Zazu gulped. *Oh, dear*, he thought worriedly. *This isn't going to end very well.*

Scar gestured towards the sky with his paw. "Now, go on. Find the two cubs and bring them back here. And if you don't return within the next two hours, then I will find you, and I will personally tear off your legs, then your wings, and then your head. Am I making myself clear?"

"Transparently," Zazu replied, before quickly spreading his wings and taking off into the air, flying away from Pride Rock as fast as he could.

"Do you think he'll come back?" Hago asked, curious.

"Of course he'll come back," replied Scar. "He's a coward, and cowards *always* come crawling back to their masters." Scar strode over to Hago's side, and spoke in a quiet tone. "Anyway, there is something I've been meaning to ask you."

"Go ahead," Hago urged, wondering what Scar wanted to ask him. Probably something about ordering somebody else around. That was how it usually worked for a lion like him.

"Do your hypnotised victims do *anything* you ask them to?" Scar asked, prompting a confused look from Hago.

"Well, duh!" Hago exclaimed. "That's the whole point of hypnotism!"

Scar shook his head. "No, no, no. You don't understand what I'm trying to convey here. I mean, does the hypnotism stretch to... *romantic* extents?"

Hago narrowed his eyes in disgust, finally realising what Scar was trying to ask him. "That's just sick. You're trying to attract a mate through mind control?"

"Not exactly a mate, just someone I can have my way with without them putting up a fight. I can be a very forceful creature, you see."

Hago gagged in disgust. "Now that's wrong. I simply cannot condone using hypnosis to gain sexual pleasure."

"I can do whatever I like!" Scar raged. "I'm the King!"

"As am I," Hago reminded him. "Or have you forgotten again, because that's what it sounds like."

"Are you saying it'll work?" Scar asked, getting tired of this.

Hago sighed. "Yes, Scar, it most certainly *will* work. You could have your way with the entire pride in one day if you wanted to. Just promise me you'll stay away from Mufasa."

Scar smiled. "I'll rally the hyenas to find me a suitable lioness."

"Yeah, from what age?" Hago joked with a chuckle, causing Scar to turn around and grin frighteningly.

"Age is of no concern to me," he said chillingly, before making his way down Pride Rock.

Hago looked up at the sky, his eyes widened. "Did I just hear that?" he asked himself, before turning his attention to the den opening. He saw Bora walking out of the den, no longer clutching his cheek in pain. He still had three claw marks in his right cheek, however. They provided a memory for the painful slash he had given them.

"Nice to see you're finally here," Hago said to his brother.

Bora didn't reply. Instead, he just glided past Hago without saying a word. Confused, Hago followed after Bora. "Bora? Bora, get back here! Where are you going? I'm warning you!"

Bora turned around, and pointed at Hago firmly between the eyes. "This has gotta stop," he said before continuing on his way.

Hago narrowed his eyes. "Sorry, what? What has got to stop?"

Bora rolled his eyes and turned back around, in no mood to talk with his younger brother right now. "The way you're taking charge of things around here!"

"I don't quite understand what you mean," Hago told him.

"You know *exactly* what I mean!" Bora exclaimed exasperatedly. "Do you realise what you're doing to this pride?"

"I believe I've enslaved them via hypnosis," Hago replied, not quite sure where Bora was going with this.

"They'll die, Hago," Bora told him. "If you're going to keep the food for yourself, then you're going to starve the entire pride. Even if you *do* have complete control of them, then you won't be able to control their health. They'll starve to death, eventually. Then where will that leave you?"

"Are you really suggesting that I free them from my control?" asked Hago, as if he thought Bora was stupid. "Do you *know* what they'll do to me as soon as I release them? They'll tear me to shreds."

"It's about time somebody did," said Bora under his breath.

"What was that?" Hago asked angrily.

"I said it's about time somebody did!" Bora exclaimed. "Do you care about anyone other than yourself?"

Hago thought for a moment. "No," he simply replied.

Bora frowned. "That's what I thought. You're killing this pride, Hago! I thought that you'd at least *feed* them, but this is just ridiculous! How are you gonna be a King when you haven't got a pride?"

"We can start again," Hago shot back. "Scar's searching for a suitable mate as we speak."

"Well, his repopulation scheme is going to go down a storm then, isn't it?" Bora shouted. "Do you know what he told the hyenas to do this morning?"

"Go on, tell me," said Hago.

"All right, then, I will. While I was out this morning he told the hyenas... he told the hyenas to murder all of the cubs."

Hago shrugged. "Did they do it?"

"Let's just say those cubs are lucky that they asked the only hyenas with the slightest *scrap* of a conscience," replied Bora.

"What hyenas?" Hago asked, not believing a word of this nonsense Bora was telling him.

"Shenzi and Banzai," replied Bora. "Because they actually have the bare components of a heart they managed to shift the mass murder of all the young cubs to tonight. Maybe there is some good in them, after all."

"Oh, really? Those two idiots? Well, I'll be sure to make sure those two are burnt to smouldering ashes at the end of the day."

"How can you be so heartless?" Bora asked, wondering how someone could be so cruel. He'd suffered enough from his brother before, but this was just cruelty on a scale he'd never even known before.

"*Because everyone was heartless to me!*" he screamed angrily. "Don't you understand, you blithering idiot? No one ever cared about me, so why should I care about them?"

"I cared about you," Bora told him honestly.

"Well, that's not good enough!" Hago retorted. "Why do you even care about who I'm killing? Why do you care about these stupid lions? You've killed people before with your powers!"

"*I lied!*" Bora shouted at the top of his voice.

Hago stood there in stunned silence. "What?"

"You heard me!" he replied. "I never killed anyone! I just lied to keep on your good side, because you're a psychotic freak who needs serious help!"

Hago said nothing for a few moments, before he exploded with fury. "*Get out! Now! And never come back!*"

Bora stared into his eyes. "Fine."

With that, Bora turned around and walked down Pride Rock, not looking back once, because he couldn't have cared less about Hago. Bora had tried his best to help, but obviously his best wasn't good enough for Hago. Bora wished that his younger brother was dead, because it would make his life a lot easier.

***Chapter 6*: Chapter 6: Pure, Twisted Insanity**

Chapter Six: Pure, Twisted Insanity

"I don't believe it!" Nala exclaimed as she and Simba walked through the jungle, having finished searching for something to eat. "There's not one bit of meat around here!"

"Aw, it's not all that bad," Simba assured her.

Nala gave him an unconvinced look. "Simba, there's no food at all. Where are we gonna get our strength from, huh? I can see it now. 'Sorry, Hago, can you stop trying to rip my throat out for a minute? My stomach's rumbling.'"

A few seconds of silence passed, and then Simba burst out laughing, rolling on the ground. Nala did the same after a few more seconds, and they laughed together. Every joke they ever made seemed to make them burst out laughing, whatever it was.

"Come on, Nala," Simba said through laughter. "There's gotta be *some* food around here."

"Okay then, go find something to eat," Nala told him, doubting that he'd be able to find something suitable for them.

Simba looked around quickly, and picked up the first thing he spotted on the ground, holding it out for Nala to see.

Nala saw he was dangling a long, slimy-looking worm from his paw. She giggled. "That doesn't count, silly!"

"Yeah, it does!" Simba insisted, holding it between his eyes. "It's got... a *little* bit of meat on it."

"Then eat it," Nala instructed.

Simba looked at the worm nervously. "Well, uh..."

"Go on," Nala urged, smiling.

"Fine." With that, Simba stuffed the long worm into his mouth and kept it in there, trying to avoid tasting the disgusting thing. "See?" he said with his mouth full.

"You have to swallow it, too, you know," she reminded him.

Simba nodded and swallowed the worm whole, wincing as he did so. A few seconds later, he grinned at Nala, thinking he'd won the battle. "Slimy, yet satisfying."

She giggled. "I don't think I'll be taking up eating bugs anytime soon," she said as she got to her paws and took a deep breath, trying to compose herself for the fierce battle that awaited her. This was going to be seriously tough.

Simba noticed Nala was trying to get herself ready for what they were about to do, and wandered over to her side. "Are you okay?" he asked, concerned.

She nodded. "Yeah, I'm fine. I'm just a little worried, that's all. It's gonna be pretty scary."

Simba smiled. "I know. I'm scared, too. But like we said, we've got to try. We can't just let them get away with taking everything from us."

A determined look suddenly appeared on Nala's face. "Yeah," she agreed. "Hago already killed my father."

Simba suddenly had a sympathetic expression on his face. "Yeah. I'm sorry about that."

"It doesn't matter, Simba. I never really knew him, anyway. I don't remember anything he did, I can't remember what he looked like. I can't remember anything about him at all. It still makes me mad, though."

"Why?" Simba daringly asked.

"Because I feel sorry for my Mom. She probably feels awful about it. I mean, how would you feel if someone *you* loved died?" she asked, gazing into his eyes.

Simba gazed back into Nala's eyes, and spoke honestly. "It'd break my heart."

"Plus, I bet he was a great Dad," Nala continued. "Hago basically stole all that time I could have had with him." She then

smiled, looking at Simba. "It's a good thing I still have you, Simba. I don't know what I'd do if I lost you, too."

He smiled back. "Well, I'm not going anywhere anytime soon," he assured her.

They gazed into each other's eyes for a few moments, before Nala broke the silence. "You know, I just wish a few more people ran away when they took over the kingdom. A little bit of help would be really... well, *helpful* at a time like this."

Simba laughed. "Well, who's gonna help us? Zazu?" he suggested jokingly.

At that exact moment, a scream could be heard from above the two cubs. They looked upwards to see Zazu crash straight into the ground in front of them, breathing heavily and sounding exhausted.

"Zazu?" Simba exclaimed in surprise. He shot a look at Nala. "Me and my big mouth."

Zazu looked up at Simba and Nala, his exhausted expression quickly turning into a happy one. "Simba! Nala!" he exclaimed, getting to his feet. "Thank heavens you're here! I thought I would *never* find you in this massive jungle. All it seems to be good for is insects." He frowned. "Nothing compared to our home at the Pride Lands. Or at least, what the Pride Lands *used* to be."

"What are you doing here?" Nala asked, wondering how in the world Zazu managed to escape the Pride Lands, which were under pretty tight control right about now.

"I was instructed by that ghastly villain Scar to find you and bring you to him," Zazu explained, causing Simba and Nala to both gasp. Zazu rolled his eyes. "I wouldn't worry. I'm not exactly going to turn you over, am I?"

The two cubs breathed a sigh of relief. "Looks like you're not such a chicken, after all," Simba teased.

"So if you're not going to give us to them, then what *are* you here for?" Nala asked, curious.

"Well, by the way things are looking you're the only hope we have of taking the Pride Lands back. As you know, I'm not the type of person who likes to get into a scuffle. I much rather prefer to play dead. However – and I hate to admit this – you two cubs are very brave. It astounds me that you are the only two who managed to escape, so that must mean something. I was thinking that if we worked together, then maybe we might stand the slightest chance of rescuing everyone from the control of those inept psychopaths."

Simba laughed, looking at Nala before turning his attention to Zazu. "It's funny you should say that, because we were about to go back into the Pride Lands ourselves to do the same thing you just told us to do."

Zazu looked surprised. "Oh. Really? I thought you two were thinking of escaping far away to start your own pride somewhere."

"What was that you just said?" Simba asked, narrowing his eyes.

"Oh, nothing. Anyway, what was your plan exactly?" Zazu asked, trying to change the subject.

He succeeded. "Well, we were going to try surrendering to the hyenas, but now that you're here, it makes things a little easier for us," Simba explained as he and Nala shared a sneaky look.

Zazu didn't quite understand. "What exactly do you mean by that?"

"You've been ordered to take us to Hago and Uncle Scar, right?" said Simba.

Zazu nodded. "Yes. So...?"

"So, that's what you're gonna do. You can take us straight to Pride Rock without anyone trying to stop you. Then once we get there, we can fight the two of them and try and save everyone."

"Ahem, I think you mean *you* are going to fight the two of them while I hide under a rock somewhere," Zazu corrected him.

Simba rolled his eyes. "Fine. Have it your way, Banana-Beak."

"That's *Mister* Banana-Beak to you, fuzzy!" Zazu shot back.

"Hello!" Nala interrupted the two. "Arguing isn't exactly helping, you know! We have to work together!"

Simba frowned. "Fine. But you'd better not chicken out like you did last time!"

"And you'd better keep that mouth of yours firmly shut before I let your secret out!" Zazu shouted, causing Simba to – for once – look really confident.

"Well, for your information, I'm going to spill that secret tonight!" Simba told him.

Zazu laughed. "Well, I can't *wait* for that!"

"Are you finished?" Nala asked, losing her patience. Even in a life-threatening, near-death situation, Zazu could still find the time to be his irritating little self. It could be seriously frustrating at times.

Simba sighed. "Look, let's just worry about fighting with each other later. We've gotta fight the *bad guys* first."

"So, let me get this straight: you want me to take you right up to Pride Rock, and then you're going to try and tackle those two menaces by yourself? That's just crazy!"

Simba looked at Nala and smiled. "It's crazy, yeah. But it just might work."

Hago had sat on the edge of Pride Rock for a while, venting out his anger. After that little ordeal with Bora, Hago had been well and truly infuriated. Of course, he thought that it was all *Bora's* fault, and not his own. To Hago, nothing was ever his fault. It was always someone else who got the blame. He wasn't the type of person who owned up to his own mistakes.

Once he had calmed down, he turned around and wandered back into the den, and his eyes widened in horror at what he saw in there.

He realised that he must have been *very* deep in thought, because he hadn't heard Scar return to Pride Rock. Hago mentally slapped himself, because right now every part of Hago wished he *had* heard Scar, and had stopped him from going into the den.

Scar was hunched over a young-looking lioness, and Hago noticed he looked quite tired, like he had just finished doing something exhausting, yet pleasuring.

Luckily, Hago had been a bit late to catch Scar in the act of what he was previously doing to the young lioness. However, what Scar was *currently* doing to the lioness was far more disturbing and horrific.

Hago glanced down and noticed a pool of crimson seeping out from underneath the lioness. Glancing slightly upwards, he saw that Scar's long, sharp claws were embedded in her stomach. He had stabbed her with his claws.

There was now one question on Hago's mind: why? "Scar, what are you doing?" Hago asked, shock and horror evident in his voice.

Scar turned to Hago, his claws still fixed firmly in the young lioness. "She wasn't good enough for me, so this is her punishment. A slow, painful death."

The lioness coughed and choked up blood, which dribbled down her slim body, managing to make the scene only more disturbing. A few seconds of rasping and choking passed, before the lioness ceased coughing and died, her blue eyes still wide open in shock.

Scar grinned evilly up at Hago, who reacted with a shocked expression. Hago cleared his throat and finally spoke. "H-how old was s-she?" he stammered, still quite shaken up by what he had just witnessed.

Scar looked down at the ground and sighed, still smiling. "Teenagers obviously don't please me enough."

Hago gasped and put a paw to his face. "Oh, my... You didn't seriously do that to a teenage lioness, did you?"

Scar shrugged, and strode right past Hago, not giving the dead lioness a second glance. "So what? Age is of no concern to me."

"Scar, I have to say that was the freakiest thing I've ever seen before," said a voice from the darkness of the den.

Scar turned to see Shenzi and Banzai emerge from the darkness, horrified expressions on their faces. Hago could see they were trying to be cool about it, but he could tell they had been really traumatised by it.

"What are you doing here?" Scar asked, rather offended that the two hyenas had witnessed what he had been doing not too long ago.

Shenzi cleared her throat and spoke. "You never officially told us to leave after... Well, you know."

Scar grinned. "My mistake."

"Scar, what are they talking about?" Hago asked, curious.

"Oh, I killed their little pal, Ed. He was of no use to me anymore. Far too stupid, in my opinion."

"What?" Hago exclaimed in shock, wandering towards the darkness and past Shenzi and Banzai.

Then he saw it. The dead, bloodied corpse of Ed lying on the ground. His throat had been cut, and blood was splattered all over that particular cave wall. His tongue was lolling out, a grin on his face. It was as if he had enjoyed it.

Hago turned to Scar. "Why did you do it?"

"That's what happens when someone is of no use to me anymore," Scar replied as he walked out of the den. "They are *eliminated*."

Hago glanced at Shenzi and Banzai, and saw from the look in their eyes that they had been crying earlier. He collapsed to the ground, clutching his magical staff as hard as he could. "He's gone insane," Hago realised. "I've got to do something before I'm the next one to go."

AN: Wow. That was... creepy, wasn't it? Well, what did you think? It's your penultimate chance to review, you know, before the – and I mean this – *huge* ending tomorrow. It's gonna be good, so don't miss it!

Chapter 7: Chapter 7: It All Ends

AN: This is it. The moment you've all been waiting for! It's the longest chapter I've ever written! It's the final chapter of the series! Now read, read, read!

Chapter Seven: It All Ends

Simba, Nala and Zazu got past the hyenas guarding the Outlands without them even noticing. They didn't care at all, most likely because they were authorised to be there by the big bosses, Scar and Hago themselves. Zazu had been instructed to bring the two cubs back, and everyone knew it. It was efficiency, in a very evil kind of way.

"I knew it'd work," Simba whispered in Nala's ear as they walked along the dusty bleakness of the Outlands.

Nala managed a small smile. "I know. It's like we don't even exist to them."

"Keep quiet," Zazu instructed. "We're not out of the woods yet, you know."

Simba and Nala nodded and kept walking, their focus on what lied ahead. Soon they would be in the Pride Lands, and before they knew it the two cubs would reach Pride Rock, where they would have to engage in a deadly battle to win the kingdom back. For now, thoughts about the battle could wait. They had to worry about getting to Pride Rock first, and it was turning out to be much easier than they thought it would.

"How far do you think it is?" Nala asked, still whispering so the hyenas wouldn't hear them. Scar had placed hyenas strategically across the whole of the Outlands, guarding every tiny cave and every little passageway. It was like some kind of demented prison.

"Not far, now," answered Zazu. "As long as we keep our heads down we'll be fine. These hyenas are exhausted from guarding the area all day. All those slobbering poachers have to look forward to is their next meal. It's the only thing that seems to keep them going."

Simba took a deep breath, trying to muster up some courage. He needed to be brave. There was no holding back now. He had a lot to do. He had to defeat Scar and Hago, then rescue the pride, *and* confess his feelings to Nala. It was a tough job, but someone had to do it.

He just prayed that he *could* do it.

Hago wandered out of the den, feeling rather sickened right now. He had the feeling that Scar was slowly going insane. First of all he'd ordered all the cubs to be killed, then he'd done the most horrible thing to a teenage lioness, and then he'd killed one of his best hyenas.

Hago didn't know what Scar was going to come up with next, and what scared him was the idea that Scar might decide Hago was going to be his next victim. For all he knew, Scar could come up to Hago and pounce on him, tearing him to shreds. He had to be on guard, in case Scar tried anything sneaky. Something had to be done.

Hago turned his head to the side, and saw Scar making his way up to Pride Rock, followed by the entire hypnotised pride, all of whom had glowing red eyes. The scene looked quite frightening, to say the least.

"What are you doing?" Hago asked, fearing that Scar was about to announce that he was going to publicly murder Hago.

"According to one of the guards at the Outlands, Zazu is on his way with Simba and Nala," Scar replied as he stopped in front of Hago. "I never knew that bird had it in him. Maybe I'll keep him alive, after all."

"Really?" Hago asked, hoping Scar was starting to show a little mercy. It wouldn't exactly wipe the memory of the earlier events from his mind, but it would help a little bit.

Scar chuckled evilly. "No. I'm going to tear him apart, of course."

Hago smiled. "Oh. Of course. How silly of me. How long do you think they'll be?"

"Not too long," replied Scar. "About ten minutes at the most, I'd say. I decided to gather the entire pride, so they can watch the two cubs meet a painful end."

"What exactly do you plan on doing with them?" Hago asked, wondering just how Scar was going to torture the two cubs

before killing them. He was that type of guy. "Choking them slowly or something?"

"I was actually thinking of subjecting Simba to some visual torture first. That young Nala cub is quite attractive, actually. I'm sure I could do something purely despicable to her that Simba could watch."

Hago gagged, feeling bile rise in his throat. "You c-can't do that!" he stammered. "That would be horrible for *me* to watch! Have you no shame?"

Scar frowned menacingly. "Are you arguing with me?" he asked.

Hago froze on the spot, realising that he had upset Scar. He couldn't do that. Scar would murder him! "Uh, no. I was just joking. You go right ahead and do whatever you want with the cubs. I'll just stand here and watch."

Scar smiled. "Good," he said before turning to the enslaved pride. "I want all of you in there," Scar instructed, pointing to the den.

"Yes, master," the pride obeyed in a hypnotic voice, walking past Hago and Scar and into the den, turning around so they could see the outside world, and the execution that would shortly follow.

Shenzi and Banzai staggered out of the den, their eyes bloodshot from crying. The death of Ed was quite a hard one to take in. They'd never experience death like that before. Well, they had, but not the death of someone they actually *liked*. It had hit them really hard, and the person that they now hated more than anyone else in the world was Scar. He'd committed the horrible act for his own sick pleasure, and that was the final straw for the two of them.

Shenzi and Banzai sat beside Hago, and just stared down at the ground, not wanting to make direct eye contact with Scar at any point during the day.

Scar looked at Hago. "Hago, I want you to do something to attract the attention of the two cubs."

"And what might that be?" Hago asked, fiddling with his staff in his paw.

"Set the ground below Pride Rock on fire," Scar instructed, causing Hago to stare at Scar with a confused look on his face.

"Sorry?" said Hago, not quite believing what Scar was telling him to do.

"You heard," replied Scar. "Burn it. Now."

Hago sighed. "If you say so," he said before walking past Scar and up Pride Rock, making his way towards the edge of the instantly recognisable rock structure. When he got to the end, he turned back towards Scar. "Are you sure you want me to do this?"

Scar nodded, a wide grin spreading across his face. "It'll set the scene perfectly. The two cubs are going to experience the most horrifying death possible."

"Right then," Hago said, before aiming his staff at the grassy ground below Pride Rock.

The eyes of the staff's cobra head glowed a fiery red for a few seconds, before flames shot out from them, coating the ground.

The grass instantly caught fire, as Hago manipulated the staff so all of the ground below Pride Rock erupted with flame. The flames rose higher and higher, and the ground became smokier and smokier, creating a very ominous, tense atmosphere. It reminded Hago of his idea of what Hell looked like. It was terrifying. Hago had to give Scar credit, because he certainly knew how to create a scene.

Hago made his way back down Pride Rock and towards Scar, who was now grinning evilly, taking in the horrific atmosphere as if he was enjoying it. You could see the frightening flames burning from miles away. That was what Scar wanted it to be: a beacon of pure terror.

"Don't you think the rest of the hyenas would want to see this, too?" Hago asked. Surely Scar would want as many people as possible to witness this impressive execution, right?

Scar chuckled. "I got rid of the hyenas."

Hago's eyes widened in shock. "What? Tell me you're joking."

Scar stared into Hago's eyes, and Hago realised that Scar was telling the absolute truth. "I'm not joking. They are of no use to me now. All they want is food. Food that rightfully belongs to me." Scar pointed at Shenzi and Banzai, who still looked engrossed in the wonders of the ground. "Those two hyenas are the only remaining ones left in the Pride Lands."

"Then how did they spot the two cubs?" Hago asked.

"Well, on my way to the Outlands I just killed all the hyenas I could see. Slashes to the throat are ever so quick and deadly, you see. After I talked to the guard right at the border between the Outlands and the flatlands, I killed him, before making my way back here, killing each and every single hyena left. They're all dead."

Hago shivered. "Well, at least that means more food for us, right?"

Scar didn't answer. Instead, he just stared on straight ahead, thinking of the enormous fun he was going to have slaughtering Simba and Nala.

Nala gasped when they crossed over from the Outlands into the Pride Lands, and she saw the dead bodies of all the hyenas littered around the place.

"What on Earth has happened here?" Zazu exclaimed, shocked at the mass murder that seemed to have taken place quite recently.

As they looked on, they realised that they had all been murdered in exactly the same way: they had been slashed in the throat. Blood poured from the all of the hyenas' throats, and it didn't seem like the blood was going to ever *stop* pouring.

"That's horrible," Nala said, sounding genuinely horrified. She knew the hyenas were bad, but they didn't really deserve this kind of pain. Who had done this to them?

"They've killed their own slaves," said Zazu, wide-eyed with shock. "They've gone one hundred per cent insane."

Simba turned around slowly. "Well, the ones behind us are still alive, right?"

When Simba turned around, he saw all the hyenas that were behind them had also fallen, bleeding heavily from their throats. Nala and Zazu turned around to see it, too. "But... how did they do that?" Simba asked, both amazed and horrified. "They were alive just a second ago. I saw them."

"We'd better keep moving," Zazu suggested as he took off into the air once again, hovering lightly above the two cubs as they walked along, trying to ignore the horrible sight of all the dying, decaying hyenas. The three of them began to wonder if they should go back and forget all about this mission, but they knew they couldn't do that. It was far too late to run away now. It was their duty to try and rescue the ones they loved.

Little did they know that things were going to take a turn for the worse, if such a thing were even possible.

"It's been ten minutes," Hago told Scar. "And they *still* aren't here. Maybe they decided to try and escape."

Scar scoffed. "I seriously doubt that. As I said earlier, cowards always come crawling back to their masters. They'll be here."

"Then why are they being so slow?" Hago asked.

"Well, that's an easy question to answer. They just want to make the most of the little time they have left to live," Scar explained. "Wouldn't you do the same?"

"I suppose so," Hago replied, doubt still in his mind. Those two cubs were sneaky, and chances were they would try to escape at the first opportunity they saw. They weren't exactly the surrendering type. "But I'm still not sure about this."

"Don't worry about it. We just have to wait a few more minutes and everything will be perfect."

Hago narrowed his eyes at Scar. *I just hope you don't go insane. Oh, wait, it's far too late for that. This psychotic way of ruling the kingdom simply has to stop. It's not good for my reputation as an esteemed, powerful ruler.*

"I hope you're right," said Hago, staring at the flames which had completely engulfed the ground below Pride Rock. "Otherwise I've torched this place all for nothing."

As they walked through a grassy field, Simba, Nala and Zazu uncovered more and more bodies of hyenas, all dead. It was as if every single hyena that was under Scar's rule had been exterminated. It was confusing, but most of all sickening. They hadn't done anything to deserve this kind of torture. Scar and Hago were truly monsters.

Nala sniffed the air when she detected a rather odd smell. "Simba?"

"What is it?" Simba asked.

Nala sniffed again. "Can you smell... smoke?"

Simba sniffed the air, and nodded, a confused look appearing on his face. "Yeah. Why can we smell...?"

Simba looked ahead, and then he saw it. Pride Rock was clearly visible in the distance. However, enormous, burning flames raged on the ground below, sending thick, black smoke high into the air. It was a towering inferno.

"We're dead," Zazu said upon seeing the enormous fire. "We might as well turn around and live out the rest of our lives as outcasts now."

"We can't do that," Simba told him. "We've come too far."

"But how are we going to get past *that*?" Zazu asked, staring wide-eyed at the blazing flames in the distance. "We'll kill *ourselves* trying to get through those flames!"

"I don't think so," said a voice from behind the three of them.

Simba, Nala and Zazu turned around to see Bora emerge from behind a tree, his paws held in the air as if he was surrendering to them. "It's okay. I'm not going to hurt you."

"Yeah, how do we know?" Simba asked him, stepping defensively in front of Nala.

"I don't kill people, that's why," Bora replied. "I'm not like my brother. He kicked me out of his 'rightful pride' hours ago."

Simba cocked his head to one side, curious. "Then what are you doing here?"

"I want to help you," Bora revealed. "My brother and his partner Scar have gone too far now. This has to stop, before the whole pride dies."

"Huh?" exclaimed Nala, not quite understanding. "How is the whole pride going to die?"

"Hago's not giving them any food," Bora explained. "By next week they'll starve to death."

Nala let out a little gasp, realising that this was their only chance to set things right again. Everyone was going to die. What angered her even more was the fact that she knew her mother would die, too. She *wasn't* going to let that happen. If she had to kill Hago with her own paws to save the pride then so be it.

"And how would an untrustworthy individual such as yourself be able to assist us?" asked Zazu, doubtful that Bora would be of any use to them at all. After all, he was previously in league with that maniac Hago. This could just be part of an elaborate trap.

"We can fight back," Bora replied. "If we can get Hago's staff then we can free everybody from his control."

"And how do we know you're not lying?" Zazu demanded.

"Because I made the staff for Hago. I know how it works, and how it can be used to defeat him. If we destroy the staff then we'll free everyone from his control. From there it'll be easy, because it appears all the hyenas are dead, and that just basically leaves Hago and Scar to deal with. The pride can take care of those two easily. All we have to do is get that staff."

Simba, Nala and Zazu gave each other uncertain looks, before Simba smiled at Bora. "Okay. You can join us."

Bora smiled. "Good. It's about time someone taught my brother a lesson." Bora stared at the flames that were burning brightly below Pride Rock, before taking a deep breath. "No turning back now."

"Unfortunately," Zazu remarked with a frown. "I'm beginning to regret ever finding you two."

"Would you rather be stuck as a slave?" Simba asked him.

Zazu folded his wings. "Well, of course not. Why would I want to be stuck as a mindless servant?"

"Exactly." Simba then started making his way towards the fiery Pride Rock in the distance. Nala and Bora followed him, while Zazu flew behind them as slowly as he possibly could. He wondered if there was a rock somewhere he could hide under...

As Pride Rock got closer and closer to them, the air became smokier and the temperature became hotter. It was when they were only a few feet away from the roaring flames that they realised something rather strange.

"Am I going insane, or are those flames staying where they are?" asked Zazu, fearing that he was losing his sanity. Maybe all these months of hard work were finally taking their toll on him.

"Yeah, I can see that too," Bora noticed as he observed the flames. They didn't show any signs of stopping, but they didn't exactly spread. If they had, then half of the Pride Lands would be engulfed in flame by now. But instead of spreading, the flames just stayed where they were. "Hago must be controlling the flames."

"How can he control flames?" Zazu asked. "Of all the stupid things I've ever heard, that has to be the—"

"You seem to be forgetting that he possesses magical powers," Bora remind him. "He can do almost anything. That's why we're going to try and get the staff from him, you know."

"I knew that," Zazu said as he looked away embarrassedly. "I was just... testing you, that's all."

Bora looked ahead and pointed to the side of Pride Rock. "Look, there's a little path at the side. We can get up through there. My brother's obviously expecting your arrival. He certainly knows how to make a show, I'll give him that."

Simba looked up at the sky. It wouldn't be long before the sun began to set, which meant that they should quicken their pace a little. Fighting Hago and Scar when it was night would only make things more difficult for them – more difficult than they already were, that is.

"We'd better hurry up," Simba said as he hurried towards Pride Rock. "We haven't got long before it's night."

"Simba, wait for me!" Nala called, running after him.

"Don't forget me!" Bora cried as he followed the two cubs.

Zazu looked around worriedly before flying after the three of them. "This is going to end horribly. I know it."

Scar glanced at the ground while he was waiting for Zazu to return with Simba and Nala, and noticed four moving shadows on the side path that led up to Pride Rock. That could only mean one thing: his prisoners had finally arrived.

There was one thing that Scar didn't quite understand: why were there *four* moving shadows? Shouldn't there only be three?

Scar realised what was going on when Simba, Nala, Zazu and Bora revealed themselves, brave looks on all of their faces. Well, all except for Zazu, who looked incredibly nervous.

A look of anger crossed Hago's face when he saw his brother was present with Zazu and the two cubs. "Bora? What are you doing here? I told you never to come back!"

"I told you before," said Bora. "This has to stop. What you're doing is just wrong. We won't put up with it."

Hago laughed. "And you're going to stop me? You, two mischievous cubs and a tiny bird? What a dysfunctional rebellion."

"A pathetic one, too," Scar added, staring at the four of them with disgust. "None of you stand a chance of defeating us. You've walked right into your own execution."

"If we have to fight you, then we will," Simba told him bravely. He wasn't going to put up with this anymore. Enough was enough.

Scar laughed, taking a menacing step towards them. "Go on, then. Fight me." Scar took another step closer. "Since you're so brave, you won't mind facing me by yourself, will you? Of course, Simba, it's a fight you won't be able to win. A fight you won't *survive*, actually. I don't mind getting my paws dirty. Ever since you were born you've been nothing but an insufferable nuisance, and finally I can punish you for it. I'm going to savour the feel of your blood dripping from your own

throat. It's about time you finally met your end. Finally I can tear your—"

Scar suddenly stopped his threatening talk when a bright green flash was heard from behind him. Scar stood on the spot, a wide-eyed expression of shock on his face. Three seconds exactly passed, and he slumped slowly to the ground, completely lifeless.

When Scar fell, Hago was revealed to be standing behind him, grinning evilly. He had his staff held out, and everyone realised that Hago was the one who had just murdered Scar.

"Sorry, Scar, but you were getting too controlling for my tastes," Hago said to the dead corpse of his former co-King. "You always said that I should 'be prepared', but you never seemed to prepare yourself for being double-crossed." Hago chuckled at his joke.

"Why did you do that?" Bora asked his brother.

"Because this pride is only big enough for one King, and that's me. Besides, the stuff he was doing with the Pride Lands was *far* too disturbing. I did this pride a favour, if you ask me."

"Amen to that," muttered Shenzi under her breath, as she and Banzai continued to stare down at the ground. Tiny smiles appeared on both of their faces, happy that Scar was finally dead.

"Now that leaves one little problem to take care of," Hago said as he pointed at Simba, Nala, Zazu and Bora. "You four. Who shall I kill first? I'm quite spoilt for choice, aren't I?"

Simba gritted his teeth angrily. "You're not killing any of us," he told Hago firmly.

Hago rolled his eyes and pointed his staff at Bora. Arcs of electricity shot from the staff's eyes and struck Bora in the chest. He screamed at the top of his voice in pain as he was horribly electrocuted. Hago simply smiled, delighting in torturing his older brother.

After a few seconds, the arcs of electricity ceased, and Bora collapsed to the ground, eyes closed. His body was smoking, but he was still breathing. Hago hadn't killed him. Not yet.

"That's just a taste of what is to come," Hago said, staring into Simba's eyes. Simba could tell from the look in Hago's eyes that he wasn't lying.

However, even though Hago terrified Simba, the young cub still stared at Hago with a look of raw determination. He was feeling nothing but bravery flowing through every inch of his body. Simba felt ready to pounce on Hago at any moment.

Hago put a paw to his chin thoughtfully. "I wonder who I'll torture next?" A menacing grin spread across his face as he pointed the end of his staff at Nala. "How about you, Nala? Let's see how loud I can make you *scream*."

That made Simba lose it. With an angry cry, he leapt right at Hago, his claws extended. He was going to tear that monster to pieces! No one was going to hurt Nala while he was still breathing!

Simba slashed Hago in the face, tearing into his flesh and cutting his right eyeball, before Simba fell onto his back.

Hago cried out in pain, but didn't fall or stagger backwards. Instead, with a furious roar he grabbed Simba by his chest, digging his claws deep into Simba's body. The cub cried out in pain, but Hago didn't care one single bit. To add insult to injury, he threw Simba across the ground, sending him skidding towards Pride Rock.

"Simba!" Nala cried, worried for the safety of her best friend. She wanted to run in and help him, but she feared that might make things even worse. She could only stand there, feeling completely helpless.

Simba struggled to get back up again, but he just about managed it. He glanced down momentarily and noticed blood was dripping down his chest from several cuts Hago had given him when he grabbed him. It stung, but Simba ignored the pain. His focus was firmly on Hago.

He looked back upwards just in time to see Hago pounce at him. Simba rolled out of the way, almost toppling off the side of Pride Rock as he did so. At the last second he managed to grip onto the side of the famous rock structure, pulling himself back up to safety.

Hago roared again and took another swipe at Simba, this time hitting him on his left hind leg. Simba collapsed to the ground again, but only for a second before he hopped back to his paws. Blood dripped from the wound in his leg, but again it didn't matter to the brave cub.

"You've meddled with my affairs for the last time!" Hago yelled, before slashing Simba hard in the face, causing Simba to slump onto his stomach. Blood poured from three claw marks that had appeared in his right cheek.

Simba made an effort to try and get back, feeling weaker than ever. He barely managed to get to his paws before Hago slashed Simba in the face again, this time sending him onto his back – and onto the very edge of Pride Rock. He was about an inch away from falling into a mighty pit of flame.

Hago looked down at his greatest enemy, and smiled at seeing the cub with several deep cuts and a black eye. This was it. Victory would finally be his, at long last!

Simba couldn't even find the strength to get back up anymore, let alone fight. His body felt totally devoid of energy. He felt so weak, so powerless. He was pathetic. He was nothing. How could he have been so stupid? No one could take on Hago and actually defeat him. What was he thinking? He was going to experience a horrible death, and there was nothing he could do about it.

"Don't you see now?" Hago asked the fallen Simba. "Don't you see how worthless you truly are? You're nothing, Simba. You're no use to anyone alive, so consider your death a reward. And don't worry about Nala." He grinned evilly. "I'll take *good* care of her."

Hago pounced at Simba, ready to tear his throat out. However, Simba leapt to his paws and rolled underneath Hago, using the last ounce of strength he could find in his weakened state.

Hago's eyes widened in horror as he overshot his jump and toppled over the edge of Pride Rock. Simba turned around to see Hago vanish from sight, never to be seen again.

Simba smiled, and breathed a deep sigh of relief as he turned around to return to Nala. "That was a close one."

Suddenly, something grabbed Simba's hind legs, and he collapsed to the ground, feeling an unknown force dragging him towards the edge of Pride Rock.

Simba looked behind to see Hago, the top half of his body slumped over the edge, holding Simba by his hind legs and dragging him towards his doom. He had a malicious look in his eyes, and an insane grin on his face. If Hago was going to die, then he was taking Simba with him.

Simba tried to hold on to the ground, but Hago was dragging him far too fast for him to get a good grip with his claws.

When he was right at the edge, Hago started to laugh maniacally at the top of his voice, his laughter echoing into the evening sky. The flames roared loudly beneath him, all too eager to swallow him up, and whoever he was dragging with him.

Simba could feel his heart pounding in his chest as he thought of a way to prevent himself from dying along with Hago, but no solution seemed to present itself to him.

Simba's claws were now digging into the edge of Pride Rock as he dangled above the enormous flames below. Hago had since fallen from the edge, and dug his claws firmly into Simba's hind legs, desperate to drag the cub to his doom.

Hago's laughter seemed to increase in volume, thinking that there was no way for Simba to escape his fate now.

Simba could feel himself about to fall off, as a lick of flame shot up from the inferno and burnt Hago's back, causing him to let go of Simba's hind legs and tumble into the fire below, still laughing manically.

Simba looked down as the flames consumed Hago entirely, leaving no trace of him at all. He was gone for ever.

Simba looked upwards, and tried with all his might to clamber back up to Pride Rock. He agonisingly inched his way to safety, before finally collapsing onto his back on the edge of Pride Rock, victorious.

Simba turned his head to look at the roaring flames, when he noticed the flames were fading away, as if they were never there. It only took Simba a few moments to realise that the flames were disappearing because Hago's staff had been destroyed in the fire, meaning that he no longer had a magical hold over anything.

The flames disappeared, and the ground below Pride Rock hadn't even been scorched one bit. As far as nature was concerned, the flames never even existed.

"Simba!"

Simba turned his head to see Nala running up Pride Rock, a look of worry on her face. He could just about make out the outlines of the pride behind him. They had been freed from Hago's control. No doubt they were going to be wondering about what to do with whoever was behind this. They wouldn't need to do anything, because the masterminds behind it no longer walked the Earth.

Nala collapsed at Simba's side, breathing heavily. "Simba? Are you all right?"

Simba tried to speak, but his mouth failed to form any words. He just stared into Nala's beautiful eyes as a smile slowly appeared on his face, his eyes half closed. He could feel everything slipping away from him, and he began to wonder if he was dying.

"Simba, please say something!" Nala urged, shaking him furiously. "Anything! I don't want you to die!"

Simba's blinked a few times, fighting to remain conscious, but he just couldn't manage it. He rested the back of his head on the ground as his eyes slowly closed, surrendering to the darkness.

The last thing he remembered seeing was Nala's wonderful face...

"Simba!" Nala cried as she saw his eyes close. "Don't go! Please!"

Nala stared down at her motionless best friend, as she felt tears begin to well up in her eyes, slowly realising that her best friend wasn't going to say anything to her ever again. Simba was dead.

Nala sniffled. "No... You can't... I don't want you to... Oh, no," she said before she started to sob and cry uncontrollably, burying her face in Simba's bloodied chest. Her body shook as the sadness of Simba's death overwhelmed her.

She looked up at Simba's face as she cried, not being able to take the loss of her best friend. "It's not fair! Please, Simba, if you can hear me just wake up! I don't want you to die! You're so brave and wonderful and... *I love you!*"

Nala buried her face in Simba's chest, absolutely heartbroken. This was what Simba got for being so brave? His reward was death? It wasn't fair!

"Ow, my head..."

Great, so now Nala was hearing Simba's voice in her mind. She was going insane. Could things really get any worse for her? Seriously, how could anything bring her any lower after all of – wait, *what?*

Nala looked upwards to see Simba groggily look around, having just woken up. He blinked a few times as his senses returned to him. "What's going on?" He then noticed Nala, and a wide smile spread across his face. "Nala!"

Nala felt a huge grin spread across her face as she realised Simba was alive. She hugged him tighter than she had ever hugged him before, relieved that he wasn't dead. "Oh, Simba! You're alive!"

He chuckled. "Yeah, I guess I am. That was a pretty close call, huh?"

She giggled. "I'm just happy to have you back."

They gazed into each other's eyes, and that was when Simba remembered something. He glanced up at the sky, and could see that the sunset was in full swing, slowly turning the day into night. He looked at Nala, and saw that she was snuggled right up to him.

He smiled when he realised that the moment couldn't be any more perfect for what he was about to tell her. It was odd – he was covered in bruises and cuts, and Nala had just been crying her eyes out not a few moments ago. However, this was how he had always envisioned things. They were sat watching the sunset together, and they were as close to each other as they could possibly get. It was perfect.

Simba could feel his heart hammering in his chest as he cleared his throat. "Nala, I have something to tell you."

Nala smiled as she stared into his auburn eyes, thinking about how great it would be if Simba confessed his feelings to her at right this moment. It would be quite an odd time to say such a thing, considering they had just been through a horrific battle, but it would still be perfect to her.

Of course, such a thing would never happen, because Simba just didn't think of her in that way. She was just being silly again. How could she be so stupid to even think such a thing?

"Okay, what is it, Simba?" Nala asked, wondering what he was going to tell her. Probably something funny. That was

what he usually did. He was such a silly little cub!

Simba took a deep breath as he stared into Nala's teal eyes, his heart racing like mad. He was going to tell her now, or he wasn't going to tell her at all. This was his final chance, and he was going to act on it. He opened his mouth and spoke the words he'd wanted to say for such a long time.

"I love you."

Nala's eyes widened in shock. Did he really just say that? No, no, she couldn't have heard that right. Her mind was playing tricks on her, like it always did. It was another one of her stupid dreams.

"What did you say, Simba?" Nala asked him, not believing what she was hearing. She obviously didn't hear him correctly...

He smiled bashfully. "I said I love you," he confessed, feeling like a weight had been lifted off his shoulders. He felt incredibly embarrassed, but it still felt good to finally confess to her how he really felt. The only thing he had to worry about now was if she returned his feelings, and right now Simba couldn't really tell.

Nala just stood there, completely shocked. He said it twice! Did that mean that... he really *did* love her?

"R-really?" Nala stammered in shock.

Simba nodded. "I love everything about you, Nala. You're the most beautiful girl in the world. How could I *not* love you?"

Nala's voice caught in her throat as her heart began to race. She felt like the most important cub in the world right now. She'd never felt anything like this before. Simba loved her, and that meant that her dream had finally come true.

"Oh, Simba..." she said as a grin spread across her face. "I love you, too!"

Nala threw her paws around him, and their muzzles met in a romantic kiss as they hugged each other tightly, feeling nothing but the deepest of love for each other.

They could have stayed that way for ever, but eventually they broke away from the kiss, both of their hearts pounding frantically as they stared into each other's eyes.

"I can't believe it," Nala told him in shock. "I never thought you actually... felt that way about me before."

"I've felt like this for a *long* time," he admitted, smiling as he blushed behind his fur. "Ever since that whole thing with Moto a while back. Ever since then I couldn't stop thinking about you. You're so fun, beautiful and there isn't anyone else I'd rather be with."

She giggled. "Well, you know what I think about you?"

Simba grinned. "What?"

"You're the silliest, funniest, cutest cub I've ever met," she told him as their muzzles met for another kiss.

Nala closed her eyes and felt herself fall onto her back as Simba kissed her. When she opened them again, she saw Simba looking down at her, grinning.

"Something funny?" she asked.

"Pinned ya!" he declared triumphantly.

Nala then realised Simba had succeeded in pinning her down, and she reacted with laughter. "Looks like you won that bet, after all. You know, I wouldn't have minded that kiss at all. Not one bit."

Simba collapsed on top of her. "Me neither," he agreed. Simba glanced down Pride Rock, and noticed the pride were muttering amongst themselves, wondering just what was going on.

"Do you think we should go fill them in on everything?" he asked, gesturing to the pride.

Nala smiled. "I guess so. After all, there's something else I think we have to tell them," she said with a giggle.

They then nuzzled each other, ecstatic that they were now together.

For ever.

"Where have those two pesky cubs got to?" Zazu asked as he looked left and right. He stood next to Bora, who had only woken up a few minutes ago, his body aching all over.

"Oh, they're around somewhere, I imagine," said Bora with a smile as he stretched out, trying to relieve himself of some of the aches in his body. Hago had caused him a lot of trouble with those blasts of electricity he shot at him. However, Bora was still happy, because he knew he wouldn't have to deal with anything like that anymore.

"Zazu, have you seen Simba anywhere?" Mufasa asked as he wandered over to his majordomo, concerned for the wellbeing of his son. He'd only recently been freed from Hago's hypnotic control, and any number of things could have happened over the last day.

"I'm afraid not, sire," Zazu replied. "But I'm sure he's quite all right. After all, if it wasn't for him then you'd still be in the control of that psychopathic nitwit."

"Did I just hear that correctly?" asked Sarabi as she joined Mufasa by his side. "Did Simba really rescue us all?"

"It's true," said Bora, looking up at them. "I'd probably be dead if it wasn't for him. He's quite the hero."

Mufasa's eyes narrowed. "Weren't you with the hyenas when they took over the kingdom yesterday?" he asked, remembering Bora's face.

Bora nodded. "Hago was my brother. We fell out, though. I tried to stop him by joining Simba, his little friend and Zazu here. He's dead now, though, and that makes me quite happy, to say the least."

"Then why are you still here?" Mufasa wondered, curious.

Bora looked left and right nervously. "I don't suppose you have any room in your pride for a lion like me? I was never that good at finding a home, and—"

"Say no more," Mufasa interrupted. "If you wish to stay here, then you are perfectly welcome."

A grin crossed Bora's face. "Oh... that's great! Thank you!"

Mufasa chuckled. "It's my pleasure. I'm sure you'll be happy here."

"Oh, I will!" Bora exclaimed, nodding frantically. "I will!"

Mufasa looked at his mate. "We'd better go find Simba, Sarabi. He's most likely looking for us."

Sarabi nodded in agreement. "I was thinking the same thing. Besides, I have to ask him if he told Nala his secret yet."

"Secret?" said Mufasa as they walked off in search of Simba. "What secret is that?"

Sarabi chuckled. "The same secret you told me years ago. The secret that made me marry you."

Mufasa then realised what she was talking about, and smiled in response. "Oh. Now I know what you mean."

"Nala?" Sarafina called as she searched around for her daughter. Just where was she? She hoped Nala hadn't gone missing. She'd had to deal with enough loss in her life. Nala would be one loss too many.

"Mom!"

Sarafina turned her head to see Simba and Nala walking down from Pride Rock, walking alongside each other, their fur touching.

Sarafina breathed a sigh of relief. "Oh, Nala!" she exclaimed as she hurried over to the two cubs. "I was so worried about you!"

She giggled. "Oh, you didn't have to worry about me. I've got someone very special to protect me now."

Sarafina noticed how close Simba and Nala were to each other and smiled. "Aw... don't tell me you're boyfriend and girlfriend?"

Nala nodded frantically. "Uh-huh!" she exclaimed, before blushing once she realised how embarrassing this was.

Sarafina laughed. "I always thought you two would make a cute couple someday." She then sighed and glanced up at the night sky as fond memories returned to her. "That's what my mother always used to say about your father and me. I can't say I blame her."

Simba nudged Nala. "Come on, Nala. We'd better go see my Mom and Dad."

Sarafina smiled. "Go on, you two lovebirds. I'll see you later."

Nala smiled back. "I'll see you later, Mom!" she said before hurrying off with her new boyfriend.

Sarafina laughed as she watched the two of them run off, resting her head on her paws. "I knew it."

"Mom! Dad!" Simba exclaimed as he and Nala skidded to a halt in front of Mufasa and Sarabi, who looked surprised to see them.

"Simba?" said Mufasa. "We've been looking for you. Where've you been?"

"It's kinda a long story," Simba replied with a chuckle.

"A *romantic* one as well, I imagine," remarked Sarabi as she looked down at Simba and Nala. "Did you finally tell Nala your little secret, Simba?"

Simba grinned and nodded. "Yep!" He put his paw around Nala and hugged her close to him. "Who'd have guessed she felt the same way about me, huh?"

Mufasa and Sarabi exchanged a look between each other and laughed. "Somehow I just *knew* you two would end up together. That's why we betrothed you," Sarabi explained. She then laughed. "It worked for me and your father."

Simba looked at Nala and smiled. "Somehow I think it'll work for us, too."

"Ah, look at them all!" Banzai exclaimed miserably as he watched the pride talk happily with each other. "How come they all get their happy ending, but we don't?"

"We're hyenas," Shenzi replied. "That's why. I don't think there's *ever* been a hyena who got a happy ending."

"Hey, you two!" called a voice the two hyenas were surprised to hear.

Shenzi and Banzai turned their heads to see Bora hurrying over to them. "What do you want?" Shenzi asked him.

"I just wanted to ask you something," he replied. "What were you planning on doing later?"

"Dying in a ditch somewhere," Shenzi joked in a bleak tone.

Bora chuckled. "Well, we can't have that, can we?"

"Huh?" Banzai exclaimed. "What do you mean?"

Bora smiled at the two. "I think you two could use a home, and because I played a part in saving the Pride Lands I'm sure I could persuade the King to find a spot for you two."

Shenzi and Banzai exchanged a shocked look between each other. "What, seriously?" Shenzi asked with a laugh, finding an offer like that hard to take seriously.

"Of course," Bora replied. "It's the least I could do for you. You two have been through quite a lot. I think you deserve a break."

Shenzi and Banzai then grinned, knowing that they weren't going to pass up a generous offer like that. "Okay, then. It's a deal," Shenzi said as she shook Bora's paw. "Make sure you let the King know how good we are."

Bora nodded. "I will. See ya."

With that, Bora turned around and headed away, leaving the two hyenas on their own. Shenzi and Banzai could safely say

that this was the happiest they'd ever felt in a long while.

"Can you believe it?" Banzai asked. "We just got offered a new home!"

"I know!" Shenzi exclaimed, grinning. "It's unbelievable! Things are finally looking up for us!"

"Yeah! This is almost as good as the time I met you!" Banzai admitted without realising what he was even saying.

"Exactly, it's almost as good as – wait, *what?*" Shenzi asked, not believing what she was hearing.

"Well, you are kinda pretty, not like all the other stupid, ugly hyenas." Banzai confessed, failing miserably at trying to sound romantic.

"Wait, are you trying to say that you actually like me a little bit more than you're letting on?" Shenzi frowned, not looking very impressed.

Banzai chuckled nervously. "Err, yeah."

Shenzi burst out laughing. "Oh, that's a good one! Did you actually think that I would love a guy like – oh, just kiss me!"

Shenzi leapt on top of Banzai, and they started slobbering each other's faces with their long tongues, covering each other with drool. To them, it seemed rather romantic. To anyone else... well, it looked absolutely sickening.

Love does funny things to people.

"So there I was on the edge of Pride Rock, fighting off Hago with this *huge* fire right behind me!" Simba exclaimed.

That night, everyone had gathered in the den to let Simba tell his story about how he saved the Pride Lands from certain doom. Everyone was there: Mufasa, Sarabi, Sarafina, Zazu, Bora, Shenzi, Banzai, and of course Nala.

"He was like, 'You'll never defeat me, Simba!' And I was like, 'Oh yes, I will!' But then he started slashing at me with his claws, but I fought back! 'Take this, and that!' I said as I hit him back. And as he tried to strike his final blow, I managed to push him off the edge and into the fire at the last minute, saving the Pride Lands!"

Everyone clapped and cheered as Simba finished his heroic story, and Nala gave him a little kiss on the cheek, causing him to blush.

"You certainly know how to tell an exciting story," she told him, causing Simba to grin at his new girlfriend.

"Thanks, Nala."

After everyone had finished celebrating that the Pride Lands were free once more, they settled down to go to sleep. Simba noticed that Bora, Shenzi and Banzai all slept with smiles on their face last night – something he didn't think they'd ever done before.

Simba closed his eyes to go to sleep, when he felt a soft paw nudge him. He opened his eyes to see Nala smiling down at him. "Tired, Simba?"

Simba nodded. "It's been a long day," he replied. "What are you doing still up?"

"There's something I wanted to ask you. Do you mind if I... you know...?"

"Sleep with me?" Simba finished.

Nala nodded, grinning. Simba grinned back and gestured for her to lay down beside him, which she did, nuzzling his chest softly. Finally she had exactly what she wanted, and she wouldn't change any of it for the world.

"Comfy?" Simba asked as he snuggled up to her and put his paw around her.

Nala nodded. "It's the comfiest I've ever felt, Simba."

They rested their heads against each other, knowing they were able to do so without fear, now that they were in a loving relationship together. "So, what are we doing tomorrow?" Nala asked.

"Something cool," Simba replied. "We'll look for the coolest place out there. And this time we won't have to worry about any hyenas, huh?"

Nala giggled. "Yeah. We'll be fine, anyway. We're the best team around!"

"Yeah!" Simba exclaimed. "Like I said – me and you against the world!"

The two of them laughed together, before they closed their eyes and tried to get to sleep.

"Simba?"

"Yeah, Nala?"

"I love you."

Simba looked up at Nala and grinned. "I love you, too."

The two cubs then kissed, realising that they had come such a long, long way over the past few months. From accidentally meeting each other to fighting off maniacs to a mighty battle atop Pride Rock, Simba and Nala had seen the very best and worst of times. The one thing that kept them going was their strong friendship, which eventually grew into a deep love for each other. A love that they knew would never change at all for the rest of their lives.

Simba and Nala knew there would be new adventures, new challenges and new enemies to face in the times that would come, but they knew that as long as they had each other, everything was going to be absolutely *perfect*.

The End

AN: And so our series comes to an end. Did you enjoy that? You might as well give me one more review to let me know how you felt about this series. I hope you're screaming for more, because... you'll be getting more. I've decided to commission another thirteen stories, leading on from the end of this *huge* one I've just written. Expect more danger, romance and excitement from me very soon!

Thanks for reading the series, because I really do appreciate it. I cannot sum up how good it feels to know people are reading and enjoying what I'm writing. When people leave such lovely reviews, I compels me to write more, and I never really stop. I *love* doing this! So thank you again for reading these stories.

Take care, and I'll see you *real* soon.

-ThatPersonYouMightKnow

COMING UP: Simba and Nala try to help a lioness who loses the will to live; a cub called Tama causes trouble for them; and the two cubs may finally have to say goodbye for ever...